

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 /068 W

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O R 151232Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9016

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

RUQMATXAMEMBASSY ATHENS 6320

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2307

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, LE

SUBJ: MARONITE SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR FRANGIE BRINGS FEAR OF MAJOR
CONFLECT

SUMMARY: MARONITE OPINION HAS SWUNG AWAY FROM AL-AHDAB
TOWARD FRANGIE. IN EFFECT, PUBLIC CHALLENGE BEING GIVEN TO AL-
AHDAB AND HIS ALLIES. THIS MAY BE FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES,
BUT ALL GROUPS REALIZE A MLITARY CONFRAONTATION COULD COME
BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER SIX-HOUR DEBATE, WHICH WE GATHER WAS MARKED BY
MUCH AGONIZING REAPPRAISAL, KATAEB POLITBURO VOTED MAR 14
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TO RALLY BEHIND FRANGIE. PARTY ISSUED STATEMENT DURING

EVENING SAYING FRANGIE SHOULD NOT RESIGN, SINCE THIS WOULD SIMPLY CREATE POWER VACUUM AND LEAVE COUNTRY TO UNKNOWN DESTINY. AT SAME TIME, PARTY AFFIRMED ITS SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN MEDIATION. KATAEB DELEGATION LED BY KARIM PAKRADOUNI GOING TO DAMASCUS TODAY. DELEGATION WILL ALSO REPRESENT NATIONAL LIBERALS.

2. NATIONAL LIBERALS LIKEWISE GIVING PUBLIC SUPPORT TO FRANGIE, WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN THE PARTY'S SPOKESMAN. AS WITH KATAEB, HOWEVER, SOME ANGUISH EVIDENT IN PARTY RANKS. DEPUTY FUAD LAHOUD OF THE PARTY, FOR EXAMPLE, ADDED SIGNATURE TO PARLIMANE PETITION CALLING FOR PRESIDENT TO RESIGN. (THIS PETITION WAS SUBMITTED FORMALLY TO PRESIDENT MAR 14 WITH 70 NAMES, BUT FRANGIE REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT). ANOTHER REPORT HAS IT THAT DANNY CHAMOUN IS STAYING AT ARMY HQ AND SHARPLY DISAGREES WITH HIS FATHER ON FRANGIE RESIGNATION ISSUE.

3. MARONITE LEAGUE, WHICH WE ARE TOLD HAD AT ONE POINT VOTED SUPPORT AL-AHDAB BY CLOSE MARGIN, NOW DENYING THIS. LEAGUE EXPECTED TO MEET MAR 15 TO DISCUSS ITS STAND AGAIN.

4. SOME SOURCES SAY THAT MARONITES IN ARMY COMMAND LIKEWISE PUTTING SELVES AT ARM'S LENGTH FROM AL-AHDAB. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HANNA SA'ID REPORTEDLY DRIFTING WITH OTHER MARONITES TOWARD FRANGIE. WE NOT YET INCLINED CREDIT THESE STORIES, HOWEVER.

5. NEW SUPPORT FOR AL-AHDAB ALSO COMING OUT. FOLLOWING KATAEB STATEMENT MAR 14, A GROUP OF CHRISTIAN OFFICERS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED PRO-FRANGIE SPOKE OUT FOR THE COUP. A SECOND GROUP OF OFFICERS JOINED AL-AHDAB MORNING MAR 15 AND GAVE FRANGIE UNTIL 1400 HOURS LOCAL SAME DAY TO RESIGN OR FACE CONSEQUENCES.

6. DESPITE ESCALATING ATMOSPHERE, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT KATAEB AND NATIONAL LIBERAL SHIFTS MAY BE FOR TACTICAL PURPOSES. KATAEB'S DECLARATION FOR FRANGIE

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MAR 14 WAS NOT CLEAR-CUT. DISPATCH OF DELEGATION TO DAMASCUS SUGGESTS CHRISTIAN LEADERS WANT SYRIANS TO GET INTO MEDIATION ACT AGAIN. A NATIONAL LIBERAL SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF MAR 15 THAT CAMILLE CHAMOUN REALIZES FRANGIE CANNOT STAY IN PRESIDENCY FOR LONG. MUCH BEHIND-THE-SCENES TUGGING AND HAULING IS EVIDENT ON QUESTIONS RANGING FROM TEMPORARILY TRUCES TO FRANGIE SUCCESSOR. BUT MEANWHILE SITUATION ON GROUND DEVELOPING QUICKLY TO-

WARD ARMED CONFRONTATION. SECURITY IN BEIRUT STREETS
AS OF MID-MORNING MAR 15 REMAINS ANARCHIC. EX-
CHANGES OF FIRE CONTINUE IN AIN EL-MRESSE AND HITEL
DISTRICT. WIDER MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN COUP
SUPPORTERS AND FRANGIE SUPPORTERS COULD COME TODAY.

7. MOMENTUM OF AL-AHDAB COUP APPEARS TO BE LOSING
STEAM, ALTHOUGH SHIFTS OF SUPPORT GOING BOTH WAYS ARE
COMING THICK AND FAST. HIS MAIN ULTIMATE RECOURSE NOW IS
LT. KHATIB'S TROOPS, ASSUMING LATTER WILLING. ACCORDING TO
UNCONFIRMED REPORT, KHATIB'S FORCES ARE MASSING IN MOUNTAINS ABOVE
BEIRUT. STANDING BEHIND KHATIB POLITICALLY IS JUMBLATT,
WHO CONTINUES TO UTTER A DOWN-WITH-THE-REGIME LINE.
THIS RISING TIDE OF LEFTIST REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC IS
INDEED THE MAIN SCARE SEEN BY KATAEB AND OTHER CHRISTIANS
AND MODERATES, WHO WONDER WITH CONSIDERABLE JUSTICE
WHERE THE END LIES TO THEIR STREAM OF CONCESSIONS.

8. PARLIAMENT MEMBERS CONTINUING THEIR CONCREASINGLY
FORLORN SEARCH FOR A "FORMULA." SPEAKER ASSAD APPARENTLY
TURNING IN DESPAIR TO IDEA THAT SYRINS MUST ENTER
PICTURE QUICKLY. IN SHORT, WE HAVE ANOTHER RACE
BETWEEN RAPID DETORATION ON GROUND AND SEEMING
SNAIL'S PACE OF POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS. MAIN HOPE
AGAIN SEEMS TO BE "SYRIA EX MACHINA."

9. THIS REPLACES 0900 REPORT.
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